

Hair
Vulcan Manassas Quarry
June 9, 2012
Submitted by Ralph Gamba

On June 9, six members of the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club, Tim, Jim, David K, Jennifer, Ralph and Mary, traveled to the Vulcan Manassas Quarry for a morning of collecting, Figure 1. Members of the Northern Virginia and Montgomery County clubs also joined us. Approximately 16 club members collected.



Figure 1. Getting Ready to Rock Collecting

TJ from Vulcan provided the sign in sheets and gave a safety briefing. Ted from the Northern Virginia club also provided more safety information.

TJ led us into the quarry for a morning of collecting. Mary found some flat rocks for her garden. Ralph found a couple pieces containing pyrite. Another collector found a piece with prehnite.

A number of collectors gathered around a boulder. They discovered a beautiful chunk of prehnite in the boulder. Everyone took turns chipping away at the boulder, Figure 2, and extracted wonderful samples of prehnite. Some of the prehnite appeared to have datolite on it. Ted discovered that one of the vugs had a hair-like mineral in it. Careful extraction provided samples of the mineral.



Figure 2. Extracting Prehnite from a Boulder by Wielding Heavy Metal

While awaiting his turn, Ralph noted a rock with a vein of a mineral with a pale purple color. He extracted a number of samples, enough to give anyone who wanted one. Later, another collector identified the purple material as amethyst.

Soon, some of the collectors went to another level and found some stilbite-Ca. (Dr. Kearns from James Madison University analyzed a sample and determined that the substance was stilbite-Ca.) Ralph remained and chipped a sample from the boulder of small calcite crystals coating prehnite.

Tim made the discovery of the day. Not too far from the prehnite boulder, he found a boulder with numerous vugs with beautiful calcite crystals. Ted described the calcite as “the best ever found here”. The largest vug contained more of the hair-like crystals. Later we identified the hair-like samples as byssolite, a member of the tremolite actinolite series of amphiboles. One collector had a high power loupe and saw stilbite crystals attached to the byssolite. We suggested to Tim that he not wrap the sample, to keep it out of the wind and to store it in a glass case to protect the byssolite. Tim also summed up our day when he said “When can we come back?”

At 11:45, TJ returned to escort the remaining collectors back to the parking lot, where we bragged of our discoveries. The find of the day was Tim’s calcite with “hair”. We thanked TJ and went on our way.